



**Lt Gen Bauernfeind, USAFA Superintendent**  
**Graduation Speech to the Class of 2025**

Good morning and welcome as we celebrate the United States Air Force Academy Class of 2025! [Psycho]

Today, we are honored to welcome our newly appointed 27th Secretary of the Air Force, the Honorable Troy Meink. Thank you for joining us today, and welcome to your United States Air Force Academy.

We are also honored to welcome:

- The 23rd Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General David Allvin and his spouse, Gina
- The 2nd Chief of Space Operations for the US Space Force, General Chance Saltzman, and his spouse, Jennifer
- The Mayor of Colorado Springs Yemi Mobolade and his wife, Abbey
- The members of the Long Blue Line of Academy graduates, our local leaders and community partners

Thank you for supporting our mission from here in Colorado, in Washington, D.C. and throughout our military community.

To the Class of 2025 [Psycho] – Congratulations! After four years of challenging military training, academics and athletics - your Day One has arrived.

On your I-Day, 24 June 2021, you entered the Academy full of smiles... for the first hour. Having arrived towards the end of a global pandemic, you received your official “command voice” welcome on the footprints wearing masks. You’ve come a long way from arriving in flip flops, showing up without paperwork, or packing like you’re going on a European vacation. Today, you are our warrior-leaders ready to lead in the Air Force and Space Force.

As you sit here, reflect on all the support you’ve received - take a moment to thank your families, your friends, your sponsor families and your support networks because they’ve been there throughout your lives and your time at USAFA.

Take the time to recognize the leaders you’ve become with the help of the Cadet Wing, your Squadron Commanders, and Academy Military Trainers.

Remark upon the knowledge you’ve gained in the classroom from your faculty. As warrior scholars, you are now equipped to confront the complex challenges our Nation faces.

And lastly, through your athletic competitions, thank your coaches, trainers, and instructors who prepared you physically and mentally to be resilient as you learned valuable lessons about character, perseverance, and leadership.

Let's give them all a round of applause.

Through these four years there has been one glaring constant – change. Who you were in June of 2021 is not who you are today. During these past four years you've triumphed, you've failed, and you fought to take your place in the Long Blue Line.

How you manage change will define your leadership. And this year, I watched you rise to the occasion, adapt, gain resilience, and achieve the Warfighting Readiness to lead our Airmen and Guardians.

In a year of transformation, you led our efforts and established our path to success. You established our foundation to Forge Warfighters to Win, Inspire Leaders of Character and Quality, and Motivate Critical Thinkers to Adapt.

As Warfighters to Win, you accepted the challenge and embraced the warrior ethos our Nation demands with a focus on readiness in all forms – physical, mental, and spiritual. You were offensively minded, mission focused, and built teams who overcame challenges and adversity. Your military training, academics, and athletics prepared you for this.

You became the example for the Cadet Wing as we established foundational warfighter skills and executed two, entire-Wing, in-the-field military exercises.

In our first year of culminating exercises, we set the bar high, and you leaped over it. Keep going strong - this is just the beginning, and you need to keep the momentum as you lead in our rapidly changing geopolitical landscape.

As warrior scholars, you integrated rigorous academics, immersive training, and cutting-edge research to prepare you for combat leadership. Your education was deliberately designed to ensure you are warfighters who can outthink, outmaneuver, and outfight our adversaries. From putting satellites into space, to winning numerous national competitions, and providing research to support our operational Air Force and Space Force's toughest problems, you advanced our strategic advantage as Airmen and Guardians.

As athletes, over the past four years, you were warriors through every competition which led us to three individual national championships, 37 All-Americans, and 16 top 25 national team finishes. And lastly, against our Military Service Academies in all sports, you dominated with an overall record of 66 - 27 - and 1, reminding West Point and Annapolis that the Air Force Academy remains, "far, far above."

As Leaders of Character and Quality you chose Col William, “Psycho” Andrews as your class exemplar. For those of you unfamiliar, each class at our Academy selects an exemplar, whose qualities they hope to emulate. Every time someone says the class year they shout the name of their exemplar. Col Andrews was a USAFA Class of 1980 graduate, and he was one of the most decorated Airmen of Desert Storm, receiving the Air Force Cross for heroism after he was shot down and captured as a prisoner of war.

After capture, he saw enemy surface-to-air missiles fly by and his wingmen fly overhead. In a moment of rebellion, he reached for his survival radio and redirected his wingmen, keeping them safe from enemy fire.

During questioning, Col Andrews refused to provide information, even as Iraqi intelligence enticed him with better treatment and a promise that, “No one would know.” But Col Andrews did not falter. He relied upon his core values and remained silent. After his release, Col Andrews continued to serve with honor until his retirement in 2010. While we lost Col Andrews in 2015 his legacy remains strong with the Class of 2025. [Psycho]

Like your exemplar, who embodied our core values and commitment to servant leadership, you made hard calls and faced adversity knowing that leaders do the right thing, the right way, even if it’s unpopular. As servant leaders our Airmen and Guardians deserve this, our missions require this, and our Nation demands this.

While here you also experienced the tragic loss of teammates. During those difficult times, you came together, you stood by one another, and you offered compassion and support through the unimaginable. This made you Leaders of Character and Quality.

Finally, as Critical Thinkers to Adapt, you learned to develop innovative solutions to complex problems, while operating with limited information. You prepared for modern and future warfare in the Air, Space, and Cyber domains, ensuring we maintain our strategic advantage for the joint force. You challenged the status quo, building teams to tackle problems from multiple perspectives. Through warfighter training, academics, and athletics, you learned to analyze and adapt to emerging threats. Our future success demands your critical thought.

Class of 2025 [Psycho], your Day One has arrived. I am proud of your hard work and perseverance, but there are challenges ahead, and you must be prepared. There is no easy path - nothing worthwhile comes without hard work, courage, and sacrifice.

I’ll leave you with these last thoughts. Our Weapons School mantra comes to mind: Be humble, Be approachable, Be credible.

**Be humble:** You have incredible talents, and as leaders, remember you're entering a force that has decades of experience – take the time to listen.... Listen and learn from your team's years of experience.

**Be approachable:** Build teams and lift them up where every team member is seen, heard, and valued. When you execute this successfully, your team will outperform your mission and your expectations.

**Be credible:** be a master of your craft, be the “go to” expert wherever you go, and be ready when the nation calls. Be credible for yourself, for your team, and for our adversaries... they are watching. Your job is to ensure they never challenge our nation by displaying your strength.

Right now, there are 325 thousand Airmen and Guardians who need your leadership, and you are ready! You are the leaders our nation deserves. Congratulations Class of 2025 [Psycho]! Fight's On!